

From anger to serenity: changing myself, understanding others

I came to Al-Anon because I was very angry at a young alcoholic. He is the son of the woman I am dating and he is making her life – and consequently mine – miserable. I wanted to learn how I could change him. I also wanted to understand what his mother was experiencing.

And because I wanted her to be happy, I needed to change her too.

To my surprise, I didn't learn how to cure the alcoholic in our lives. In fact, I was told I had no control over alcoholism. This was a shock. At the very least, a good kick in the pants should work! Not only could I not control his disease, I couldn't control my friend's reactions. What was I doing at this meeting?

Maybe it was the members' warmth and kindness or their insightful comments that kept me coming back. I attended an open A.A. meeting and read the Al-Anon literature. Soon I found myself listening and learning from all the members of the group as I continued to participate.

Over time, my anger toward the alcoholic dissipated and an understanding of his mother's angst evolved. I now realize what has been happening. I am no longer trying to change or control other people. And although I am an unfinished work, I have been working on changing myself.

Al-Anon helps me with my daily life, whether in work situations, social interactions, or the painful experience of my brother's recent death. What Al-Anon has brought me is a new outlook on life.

As I have worked on my self-improvement, I have also seen my friend improve. Each of us attends a meeting and when we get home, we telephone and discuss the insights we have gained. It is an important element that has led to a loving, supportive relationship.

On this, my first anniversary, I want to say that I admire all of you and I thank you for your thoughts, support, sharing, and courage. And yes, as the Suggested Closing says, I have come to love each of you in a very special way.

*By John F., Indiana
The Forum, February 2008*

© Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. 2008. All Rights Reserved.